

Office of Sen. Manny Villar

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News Release
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Villar files bill granting special leave for OFW spouses

Sen. Manny Villar filed a bill that will grant special leave credits to spouses of overseas Filipino workers.

Senate Bill 2588 seeks to allow all legitimate spouses who are employees in the private and public sector to avail of an additional 15-day special leave credit yearly with full pay. This leave credit may be used to attend to the needs of the OFW's family.

"Families of OFWs suffer the loneliness of being apart from their loved ones while the OFW endures the pain of solitude and isolation in distant lands just to give their families a decent living," Villar, founder of the Sagip OFW Helpline, said.

"This leave credit can be a means for them to reconnect and enjoy the many things they are blessed with as a family," he added.

In the latest statistics of the National Statistics Coordination Board, it is estimated that the country has 10.786 million migrant workers, both documented and undocumented.

Under the bill, employees availing of this leave privilege are required to submit to their employer the name of spouse, copy of their marriage contract, information as to the nature and place of work of the OFW and a copy of the OFW's passport.

The proposal was first filed by Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. in the 14th Congress. Villar filed this bill again in the hope that this will be passed in the new Congress.

"Granting the spouses of our OFWs this leave credit is a small way of giving back to the overseas workers who helped our domestic economy to grow by 7.3 percent in the first quarter of 2010 alone," Villar said.

The overseas worker refers to a person who is engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a legal resident.

Not allowed to avail of this leave are those who are absent from work without official leave; those who are on vacation, sick, forced or study leave, or those who have already availed of other forms of leave allowed by law; and those whose services are necessary to prevent loss of life or damage to property, brought about by serious accidents, fires, floods, typhoons, earthquake, epidemic or other disasters.

The bill also seeks to give income tax deduction from the employer's gross income for each taxable year, based on the actual cost paid by the private establishment in granting this leave to its qualified employees.

Once enacted into law, any employer found violating this act will be punished with a fine not exceeding P25,000 or imprisonment of 30 days to six months.

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